

May 28, 2010

Washington, D.C. – Provisions championed by Congressman Jerry McNerney (CA-11) to increase pay for the men and women serving our country in combat zones passed the House today with bipartisan support as part of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). According to estimates made by the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service, these increases will benefit approximately 400,000 service members and their families per month.

During a trip to Afghanistan last year, Congressman McNerney met with soldiers who asked him to work to increase pay for the troops and shared their struggle to make ends meet for their families back home. Many men and women in uniform haven't seen an increase in military specialty pay in years. Upon his return, Congressman McNerney introduced H.R. 4440, the COMBAT Act, legislation that would increase pay for service members.

"Last year I traveled to Afghanistan as part of a bipartisan trip to see first-hand the situation on the ground and visit with our troops," said Rep. McNerney. "During my trip, I spoke with service members who shared the struggle they face to make ends meet. One paratrooper in particular told me how hard it is to provide for his family back home and asked what I could do to help. Hearing our troops say this when they are already making tremendous sacrifices was heartbreaking. I knew I had to do something about it."

"When I returned home I introduced legislation to increase certain types of military specialty pay. Then over the past months, I worked to have pay increases for troops serving in harm's way and away from their families incorporated into the National Defense Authorization Act and passed by the House of Representatives," continued Rep. McNerney. "During this process, I thought about the promise I made to the soldiers in Afghanistan and that kept me pushing to get the job done. Today we're all one step closer to keeping our country's promise to honor and support our men and women in uniform."

After introducing the COMBAT Act to increase pay for the troops, Congressman McNerney worked closely with Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee Ike Skelton to incorporate key provisions of the COMBAT Act into the NDAA. Through direct personal advocacy with the House Armed Services Committee, rallying support among veterans and military service organizations, and a formal request made via letter to the Chairman,

Congressman McNerney successfully led the charge to increase certain types of military pay. After these provisions passed the House Armed Services Committee, Congressman McNerney pushed for consideration and passage by the full House of Representatives.

Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee Ike Skelton and representatives of Veterans of Modern Warfare (VMW), the National Military Family Association, and the Military Order of the Purple Heart recognized Congressman McNerney for his leadership with the following words.

“At Congressman McNerney’s urging, the House Armed Services Committee included provisions in the defense authorization bill to increase the maximum amount of hostile fire and imminent danger pay for the first time since 2004 and increase family separation allowance for our service members whose deployment or temporary duty requires them to live away from their families,” said Chairman Skelton. “I want to thank Congressman McNerney for his efforts to make sure our troops and their loved ones receive the first class benefits that they deserve.”

“On behalf of the national membership of Veterans of Modern Warfare (VMW), I applaud Rep. McNerney for championing legislation to more adequately compensate the men and women serving our great nation abroad,” said Donald Overton, VMW Executive Director. “Rep. McNerney’s work to increase pay for our troops acknowledges the tremendous sacrifices made by our Armed Forces as they continue to serve in the most dangerous and hostile global environments.”

“The National Military Family Association appreciates Rep. McNerney’s work to increase the Family Separation Allowance in the National Defense Authorization Act,” said Kathleen Moakler, with the National Military Family Association. “This allowance is very important to military families when a service member is deployed. We have long supported an increase to keep the Family Separation Allowance in line with escalating expenses for military families and thank Rep. McNerney for his leadership on this issue.”

“The Military Order of the Purple Heart is in full support of Rep. McNerney’s legislation,” said National Commander Jim Sims. “We can never do enough for our brave men and women in uniform. This is an important step in recognizing their sacrifices.”

Thanks to Congressman McNerney’s efforts, the House today passed increases in pay for the troops in the following categories: Hostile Fire Pay (HFP), Imminent Danger Pay (IDP), and Family Separation Allowance (FSA), all of which were included in Congressman McNerney’s legislation.

- Hostile Fire Pay, currently set at \$225 per month, is for service members exposed to hostile fire or explosion of hostile mines.
- Imminent Danger Pay, also set at \$225 per month, is for service members serving in specifically designated places deemed to pose a threat of physical harm or imminent danger due to insurrection, war, or terrorism.
- Family Separation Allowance, currently set at \$250 per month, is a partial reimbursement for service members involuntarily separated from their dependents and is intended to provide for extra expenses that result from such a separation.

In the legislation passed by the House today, both HFP and IDP would increase to \$260 per month and FSA would increase to \$285 per month.

The Senate is next expected to take up consideration of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).